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Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Mali: ongoing human rights violations in central Mali and the persecution of the Peuhl people

Our organization is appealing to the UN Human Rights Council to take action against the assaults of the Peulh people in Mali. The Peulh are a West African minority in Mali. They make around 10% of the Malian population. The state of Mali itself is a multiethnic state with different religions and backgrounds. Tensions between the different ethnicities escalated in 2012 after the uprising of the Tuareq minority in the north of the country. Islamist groups with the goal to overthrow the Malian government and to establish an Islamist caliphate in Mali exploited these tensions. In 2013, the French troops were asked by the Malian government to intervene. With their help, the Malian army was successful to push back the jihadist into the north of the country. Only a few Peulh have joined the Islamist forces back then. Nevertheless, until today the whole community faces harsh persecution from the Malian authorities. Reports indicate that dozens of them have disappeared and even were killed. It seems like the Peulh are suspected of being Islamist just because of their ethnicity. The following sums up some of the main assaults on the Peulh people by the Malian army forces.

Fulani Persecution by the Malian army forces

The problem started with the foundation of the "Front de liberation du Macina" in the centre of Mali in 2015. This terrorist group is mostly composed of Peulh people. The tragic thing about it is that even if only a small minority of the Peulh is associated with terrorism the whole group is judged. Moreover, it is not only other ethnicities that accuse them of affiliation with radical Islamist but also the Malian army as it seems.

21th February 2018: In the central rural community of Sokolo, the army arrested seven ethnic Peulh. The men were celebrating a baptism and not doing anything suspicious. Relatives later heard that the seven men were killed in custody. Apparently, there was not a fair trial or a juridical process. The Malian government proclaimed on 27 February 2018 that these men were actually killed during a fight in the region. This claim cannot be considered true knowing the situation mentioned above.

25th March 2018: In the small village of Dogo in the central region of Mopti, residents found six bodies including a father and a son. These men considered as Peulh were arrested a few days earlier by Malian security forces. Several villagers described the victims as well known merchants who had not been linked to radical forces or terrorist groups. Once again it seems like these men were arrested and killed because of their ethnic background.

May 2018: The United States are calling for a clear and transparent investigation in Mali. In the Mopti region a mass grave with more than 25 bodies of Peulh people has been found. Furthermore, Washington declared that it suggests that certain personnel of the Malian army might be involved in the killings. Canada also published a statement and described itself "deeply concerned" about the involvement of the Malian forces in the extra-judicial killings. Nevertheless Mali president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita insisted that the army forces are respecting human rights a claim that we cannot confirm.

June 2018: The Peulh association declared that in June Malian army forces entered the village Nantaka and separated 25 Peulh men from the other villagers. Later these men were killed by the troops. Moreover, villagers discovered another mass grave outside of their village. Once again, this indicates that the vast majority of civilians killed by the army are Peulh people. This takes us to the suggestion that the Malian soldiers target them due to their ethnicity.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of Mali:

- To ensure that no civilians are executed extra judicially by the Malian army in their fight against terrorism. The Malian government should guaranty the protection of the civilian population. All perpetrators of human rights violations against civilians should be brought to justice. Impunity for military personnel should end.
- To start a meaningful dialogue with credible representatives of the population in the Macina to ensure development and a better livelihood for Peulh people.
- To strengthen the infrastructure and state administration in the neglected regions of Central Mali.